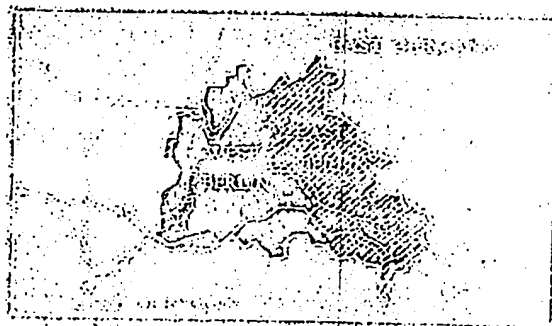


~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

SRP: 100-7-250

Classified by 6036

11 June 1959

~~SPICIAL NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATE~~~~SOVIET TACTICS ON BERLIN~~

CIA HISTORICAL REVIEW PROGRAM
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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

Date 7/9/93

HRP 93-3

11 June 1959

SUBJECT: SNIE 100-7-59: SOVIET TACTICS ON BERLIN

THE PROBLEM

To estimate likely Soviet tactics on the Berlin issue, assuming that the Geneva Conference terminates without result and without agreement to a summit meeting.

QUESTIONS POSED BY THE PROBLEM

1. If the Soviets allow the Geneva meeting to end in stalemate, they will presumably do so on the calculation that a period of additional pressure on the Berlin problem will finally induce the Western Powers to make substantial concessions. The Soviets might anticipate creating a situation in which the Western Powers under pressure of a deepening crisis would be forced to come to the summit, and would be prepared there to accept a settlement more favorable to the USSR than any they have so far contemplated. The main questions posed by this assumed Soviet course are: What degree of pressure would the Soviets think appropriate to achieve the result

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sought? What would be the measures they might undertake to apply this pressure?

COURSE I -- THE ALTERNATIVE OF EXTREME PRESSURE AT AN EARLY DATE

2. As an extreme degree of pressure the Soviets might proceed forthwith to conclude a separate peace treaty with the GDR and simultaneously turn over Berlin access controls to the GDR. The latter could then begin, possibly after a brief interval, to apply restrictions or conditions to access intended to test the determination of the Western Powers and to raise tensions still further. The USSR could repeat its warnings that any resort to force by the Western Powers would cause the USSR to invoke its obligations under the Warsaw Pact. The Soviets would recognize that this degree of pressure would probably provoke a major crisis, and they would not so act unless they estimated that the West would not resort to force and would finally accept in substance the Soviet demands for a revision of the status of Berlin.

3. There are a number of reasons why the course of extreme pressure described in the preceding paragraph is probably not the one which the Soviets would adopt at this time. We believe that, as the Berlin crisis developed, the Soviets may have become less certain that they could count

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on the West not to react with force. They apparently concluded at some point after they initiated the crisis last November that, unless they were willing to run grave risks of war, they would have to achieve their aims by negotiation. Moreover, to provoke such risks now would further compromise the "peaceloving" image which Soviet policy is trying to present, especially in Asia and Africa. Even if the Soviets believed that the Western Powers could be forced out of Berlin without hostilities, they would recognize that many of the post-crisis effects would be highly undesirable from the Soviet point of view. The Western Powers would probably be stimulated to close ranks and to increase their military effort. This latter would probably take the form of accelerated growth of the missile-nuclear threat to the Bloc in Western Europe, which the USSR has been trying hard to check. The outlook would be for an intensified period of cold war tensions. The net effects of all this on the Bloc's current domestic and foreign policies would probably be seen by them as adverse. These considerations persuade us that a course of extreme pressure in the wake of a Geneva stalemate is not one the Soviets would be likely to pursue. Even if they did pursue it, however, we believe that they would not do so beyond a point which they estimated would be likely to lead to war.

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COURSE II -- THE ALTERNATIVE OF GRADUATED, PROTRACTED
PRESSURE TO OBTAIN RENEWED NEGOTIATIONS

4. The more likely alternative for the Soviets to adopt would be to increase pressures on the Berlin issue gradually and only in such degree as in their opinion would tend to induce the Western Powers to resume negotiations later, preferably at the summit, this time on terms more favorable to the Soviet positions. There would have to be a nice degree of calculation in this course. The measures taken to implement it would have to be of a kind which the West would not see as mere verbal threats. On the other hand, they should not be of a kind to present the West with a fait accompli in Berlin which would provoke a showdown prematurely. These measures would be intended to convince the West that the Soviets were prepared to take unilateral action, but that some time and room remained for negotiations to avoid a showdown, and perhaps to salvage something of Western interests. Inducements would be provided in the form of Soviet statements of readiness to resume negotiations at any time. We think steps of this kind would be open to the Soviets to take, and that their course of action after Geneva would probably be of this character.

5. Such a Soviet campaign to build up pressure gradually accompanied by demands to resume negotiations, would probably

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begin with propaganda blaming the Western Powers' rigidity for the breakdown at Geneva. There would be warnings that the danger of a clash over Berlin was increasing, and announcements that the USSR was still determined to achieve its demands in Berlin. Such propaganda could be orchestrated with harsher notes issuing from East Germany. A plausible next step would relate to the negotiation of a separate peace treaty with the GDR, with intervals of time between the successive phases -- setting of a date for negotiations, then a negotiating conference and initialling, and finally ratification. Once this latter stage had been reached, full implementation would not need to be undertaken at once. The Soviets might first withdraw their forces from East Berlin as an earnest of their intentions, and only later and by degrees turn over access controls to the GDR. Even when this process was complete the GDR might still not attempt to interfere with Western access, and might even announce that it would not do so for a certain period. At this stage the Soviets would probably estimate that the Western Powers would still believe that they had room for negotiation since they have already agreed to accept GDR access control under some formulation of the agent theory. The aim at all stages would be to convince the Western Powers, or at least one or

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more of them, that the possibility of negotiation remained open but was constantly narrowing.

6. The Soviets would probably recognize that such gradually mounting pressure might fail in its purpose of inducing the Western Powers to resume negotiations on terms more favorable to the Soviets. But the Soviets would nevertheless see several advantages in it. They would believe:

(a) That the steps taken would have advanced the Soviets toward a unilateral achievement of their aims in Berlin or would have prepared the basis for direct harassment or closure of access to Berlin along the lines discussed in Paragraph 2.

(b) That, even if they wished to resort to such extreme pressure finally, the protracted tension over the Berlin issue would have sowed sufficient alarm and disarray in the West so that it would be unable to confront an eventual showdown with unity and firmness.

(c) Finally, that even if the course of graduated pressure did fail the Soviets would not be obliged to pass over to the more extreme course described in Paragraph 2. They could always decide to settle for a "compromise" which

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would leave the GDR and the USSR in a better position than they had before raising the Berlin issue last November.

7. The carrying out of each Soviet move outlined in COURSE II would be influenced by the firmness and unity with which the West met each successive step.

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